

Rep. Sylvia Garcia
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Member Day Remarks

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for allowing me to speak here today. I am eager to share my Transportation and Infrastructure-related priorities for this Congress. It is our responsibility to ensure that our constituents have functional, safe, and reliable transportation options and infrastructure systems. This nation's transportation and infrastructure system must serve as a convenience to all Americans, not a hindrance.

In my district, blocked railroad crossings are a major issue. Texas leads the nation in number of blocked railroad crossings, and Houston leads the state. In 2022, there were 3,429 reports of blocked intersections in Houston alone, and the East End, a neighborhood in my districts, had the most reports of any other neighborhood. Thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there is now a public database for reporting these incidents of blocked rail crossings. However, far more needs to be done.

I have picked up on the work of Rep. Jim Cooper from last Congress and introduced the Don't Block Our Communities, or D-BLOC Act. This bill would prohibit rail carriers from blocking intersections with passing trains for more than 10 minutes and allow the Transportation Secretary to issue civil penalties for violations. Blocked crossings are not only a major inconvenience, but also present real dangers to our community by slowing down emergency vehicles. My neighbors have even seen people making the dangerous decision to crawl underneath a stopped train to get where they need to go. We must make a change and give the FRA legislative options to enforce penalties. I hope to see this Committee take up this bill the Congress and seriously consider the safety concerns of blocked crossings in my community.

Additionally, I would like to touch on an essential priority for the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration Authorization. Through this package, I want to emphasize my support for airport workers. As always, I stand with our nation's unions, and I want to ensure that airport employee members of the Service Employees International Union have support. In the face of a challenging commercial air travel market, we must make sure that airport employees make livable wages and are supported in the workplace. I commend Rep. Chuy Garcia for his Good Jobs for Good Airports Act, which does exactly that. I am proud to cosponsor that bill, and I hope to see it in the final FAA Authorization.

Finally, as the WHIP for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, I want to ensure that this authorization advocates for safe, efficient, and accessible national airport systems to satisfy the needs of Latino interests and consumers in the United States. It is also important that we certify that Latinos have equal opportunity in recruitment, hiring, training, and advancement in Federal employment.

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I am grateful for the opportunity to share my priorities today, and I encourage all Members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to take them into serious consideration. Thank you, and I yield back.